CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 20 February 1990, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Hendrik Wagenmakers (Netherlands)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 536th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset, I should like to extend a warm welcome, on behalf of the Conference and myself, to His Excellency the Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs of Finland, Ambassador Aarno Karhilo, who is visiting the Conference and will address us as first speaker. The Under-Secretary of State is well known to us, as he addressed the Conference twice last year, in keeping with the active participation with which Finland, a non-member, contributes to the work of the Conference and its subsidiary bodies. I wish to thank the Under-Secretary of State for his continued interest in our work and wish him a successful mission in Geneva.

In accordance with its programme of work, the Conference begins today its consideration of agenda items 1, "Nuclear test ban", and 2, "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". However, in conformity with rule 30 of its rules of procedure, any member wishing to do so may raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference.

As announced previously, once the list of speakers is exhausted, I shall put before the Conference for adoption the report of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, contained in document CD/961.

I have on my list of speakers today His Excellency the Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs of Finland and the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. I now give the floor to His Excellency the Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs of Finland, Ambassador Aarno Karhilo.

Mr. KARHILO (Finland): The Conference on Disarmament is a forum for global disarmament, but very often regional developments are of global significance. Let me therefore start by briefly discussing the situation in Europe.

Since I last addressed this forum, barely seven months ago, Europe has undergone deep changes and the process is not over yet. The pace of events has been breath-taking in Central and Eastern Europe. This spring will be a period of historic decisions in many of those countries, a period of promises and expectations. A new kind of security structure in Europe is emerging and its contours are being shaped.

If we want to avoid being led to an unpredictable future by the revolutionary change, it is essential to have road signs and milestones to assure us that the road we are embarking on is secure.

The relationship of political dialogue and co-operation, especially in the field of arms control and disarmament, between the Soviet Union and the United States has been and will be a key element of stability amidst all the turbulence.

(Mr Karhilo, Finland)

The Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe has also proved to be an element of stability as well as of peaceful change. It will have a growing role in the joint management of the ongoing changes in Europe. The forthcoming summit of the 35 CSCE participating States will be an important stock-taking event. We expect that the first results of the CFE negotiations will be ready for signature by that time. The summit can also give new impetus to further negotiations on disarmament in Europe within the framework of the CSCE.

Prospects for substantial disarmament measures this year are promising. With the anticipated first results of the CFE talks, Europe is shaking off part of its reputation of being the most heavily armed continent in the world. We welcome the new results in the bilateral disarmament negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States as announced in their joint statement in Moscow 10 days ago. The goal set by them to conclude a treaty on the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms by the end of this year earns the sincere support of the world community, as it holds out the hope of further diminishing the nuclear threat.

In this forum Finland especially welcomes the new US-Soviet agreement on the gradual elimination of their chemical weapons. Although conditional, the commitments announced in Moscow on 10 February mark in a concrete way the recognition of the special responsibility which the great Powers - the possessors of the largest CW stocks - have ahead of complete CW elimination.

This mutual preparedeness of the great Powers to start the destruction of the bulk of their CW stocks to equal low levels pending the conclusion of the CW convention is, in Finland's view, an important catalyst for resolving the remaining political problems in the multilateral CW negotiatons. The focus of the negotiations in the CD must by their nature be global, but the bilateral progress in the CW issues is a valuable and necessary contribution to our talks in Geneva. We hope that the finalizing stage will soon be at hand and that the political commitments to the expeditious conclusion of the convention - made by the Paris and Canberra Conferences - will be redeemed this year.

During the last decade disarmament has become unthinkable without strict verification. Indeed, some earlier agreements, like the biological weapons convention, are today considered inadequate in this respect. The detailed provisions required for an adequate verification régime necessarily involve time-consuming drafting and testing of methods and instruments.

The verification of the CW convention will be more complex than in any disarmament agreement yet. Despite all the work that has been done on this subject, doubts are still occasionally voiced as to the verifiability of the convention. The relative ease and inexpensiveness of the manufacture of CW agents has been cited as a factor which renders the verification of compliance impossible.

(Mr. Kathilo, Finland)

If we were to design a régime that covers all possible covert activities, the problems might well prove to be insurmountable. But we are not trying to do that. In our view, a disarmament agreement banning chemical weapons is effective when we can be sure that existing stocks are destroyed and that militarily significant chemicals are not produced or diverted for military purposes.

The necessary confidence that the purpose of the convention is fulfilled can, in our view, be achieved by the means already envisaged in the negotiations. The combination of routine inspections, challenge inspections and ad hoc verification measures allows a variety of ways to ensure compliance with the provisions of the convention.

The work of the Technical Group on Instrumentation has clearly proved that all the verification tasks involving chemical analysis can be adequately performed with currently available instruments and methods. This conclusion has been further reinforced by the inter-laboratory "round robin" experiment which was carried out by 10 laboratories last autumn. The results of this experiment will be introduced to the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons shortly. The Technical Group on Instrumentation identified in its report several items for further work in other than purely analytical fields. When properly addressed and focused upon, none of these items should prove to be unsolvable.

The development of technical means for verification has been the focus of Finland's contribution to the CW negotiations. Since 1973 the Finnish Research Project on the Verification of Chemical Disarmament has developed sensitive and selective analytical methods to meet the verification requirements of a chemical weapons convention. The project has from its start kept full academic openness as its hallmark. No aspect of the project is classified or otherwise restricted. The scientific results have been introduced to the CD annually in the form of the "Finnish blue books", which now total 14 volumes.

The appreciative comments that we have heard from many delegations in the CD over the years have been an encouragement to the scientists involved in the project, as well as to my Government, to enlarge the scope of our endeavours through new types of initiatives. One of those has been the holding and co-ordination of the inter-laboratory "round robin" experiment I have already referred to. Another has been a training programme in CW verification methods for analytical chemists from developing countries belonging to the Group of 21. The first course of the programme is now under way.

The interest shown in this training programme exceeded our expectations. A total of 25 highly qualified chemists from nine countries applied for the first two courses to be organized this year. During this initial year one chemist each from Brazil, India, Iran, Kenya, Nigeria and Pakistan will receive training in the two four-month courses for the use of analytical methods and relevant instruments in CW verification. The Finnish Research Project intends to continue with a similar training programme during 1991, for which an invitation will be circulated to the members of the Group of 21 in the near future. The applications presented for this year's courses will the-

(Mr. Karhilo, Finland)

The sole purpose of the Finnish Research Project has been to contribute to the CW negotiations. After the conclusion of the CW convention, the purpose of the project and its laboratory will be to contribute to the implementation of the convention. The organizational forms of the analytical work needed under the convention have not been discussed in detail so far. However, at this stage we can already pledge that whatever the organizational structures will be, the resources of the Finnish project, both scientific know-how and material facilities, will be dedicated to the service of the convention and the organization.

In this spirit, the Government of Finland has decided to offer these resources to be used as the core of the central laboratory of the CWC organization. The laboratory of the Finnish Research Project will meet the high requirements to be attached to such an international scientific institution. We believe that the best way to ensure the required high standard of quality, reliability and confidence for the analytical work is to base the organization's activities in this particular field on an established and well-known institution rather than on yet-to-be-created laboratories. The benefits of this approach are obvious.

A total ban on chemical weapons can be truly total only if it is universally adhered to. The universality of the convention will be its main pillar when it is in force, but is also the main factor behind the relatively slow progress in the negotiations. To take care of the interests of all nations in an equitable way and to assure them that no country will gain an undue edge, either military or technological, over the others is a demanding task. In order to achieve this, it is of the utmost importance that no country will be deprived of the possibility of participating in the negotiations if it wishes to do so. This basic requirement should be supported by other measures which serve the same goal of universality.

During the 1989 session we very much appreciated the extra care the Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons took to encourage the observer delegations to participate actively, as well as to report on progress achieved to those delegations that are not represented at all in the negotiations. The regional efforts undertaken by Australia and Indonesia to promote awareness of CW issues is also a good example of possible measures. The Finnish CW verification training programme, too, is meant to serve the purpose of universality.

We wish the new Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, Ambassador Hyltenius of Sweden, every success in his demanding task of guiding the negotiations to a long-awaited final breakthrough.

I have spoken at length about CW issues, which relate to only one of the items before this Conference. This is due to the priority we attach to the rapid conclusion of the CW convention. I will now move to the first agenda item, "Nuclear test ban".

(Mr. Karhilo, Finland)

A comprehensive nuclear test ban is needed to curb the qualitative refinement of nuclear weapons. Finland, like many other countries, considers that the international nuclear non-proliferation régime embodied in the NPT would be strengthened by the complete prohibition of all nuclear tests and explosions. However, we have difficulty agreeing with those who, in addition, maintain that a comprehensive test ban is a prerequisite for the preservation of the non-proliferation régime. Such a linkage could do a disservice to both.

One of the key concerns regarding a comprehensive test ban is - not surprisingly, I might add - its verifiability. Here, as in connection with the CW convention, we think it can be done. The appropriate technical means are already available. Our own research conducted by the Finnish Research Project on Seismological Verification of Nuclear Tests has convinced us on that score.

However, we are equally convinced that there is no short-cut to a test ban. Verification provisions need to be carefully worked out and tested. The appropriate forum to do that is this Conference and, within it, the Group of Scientific Experts. Finland participates actively in the work of the GSE, as well as in the important ongoing GSETT-2 data exchange experiment.

In order to be optimal, seismic verification facilities should be evenly distributed round the globe. However, the network of seismographic stations in the southern hemisphere is scattered. In order to contribute to the improvement of this situation, Finland has for a decade co-operated with Zambia in establishing a seismic network, training the operators of the network and, most recently, assisting the Lusaka seismic station to participate in the GSETT-2 experiment.

The valuable work done by the GSE cannot, however, conceal the fact that the Conference has not been able to establish an ad hoc committee on a nuclear test ban. Its establishment now and a good start to its deliberations would facilitate the successful outcome of the NPT review conference later this year.

Finland looks forward to this fourth NPT review conference as an opportunity to strengthen the international non-proliferation régime. Finland and the other Nordic countries have already outlined a number of practical measures in this regard. My country is a firm supporter of the NPT. Indeed, in our opinion, it remains the single most significant disarmament measure undertaken by the international community so far. We are also a firm supporter of a comprehensive test ban. However, in the light of the present realities, it is doubtful whether the suggested amendment of the partial test-ban Treaty to make it a comprehensive one is the practical answer to the test ban issue. Nevertheless, as a party to the test-ban Treaty Finland will, as we have already informed the depositaries, attend the amendment conference and will do so in a constructive spirit.

In our view, the amendment conference should focus on giving political impetus to the cause of banning nuclear tests, in the same way that the Paris Conference did to the cause of banning chemical weapons. We hope that this view can be shared by other States parties to the Treaty.

The PRESIDENT: I thank His Excellency the Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs of Finland for his important statement. I now give the floor to the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Mr. Batsanov.

Mr. BATSANOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (translated from Russian): First of all I should like to welcome the Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs of Finland, Mr. Karhilo, who is here in Geneva. His statement contained a number of important and interesting points. Finland has long since earned praise as an active participant in the negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons, as well as other issues on the agenda of the Conference. It is making a considerable contribution to progress at the negotiations, particularly in the field of verification of chemical disarmament. This is greatly appreciated by the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union and Finland have agreed to co-operate in the development of procedures and means of verification, as was announced during M.S. Gorbachev's visit to Finland in October 1989. We hope that such co-operation will be of practical use to our negotiations here in this forum.

Today the Soviet delegation has taken the floor to present working paper CD/966. This is a report on a trial challenge inspection at a military facility conducted last year in the Soviet Union. Trial inspections at industrial enterprises, which were proposed in a Soviet initiative two years ago, have proved useful in the development and "fine tuning" of a system to verify the non-production of chemical weapons. At the same time they have prompted a number of States to think about the advisability of testing other verification procedures under a future convention, and in particular the important procedure of challenge inspection. The Soviet Union has not only supported this idea, but has taken steps to put it into effect.

When selecting a facility for the holding of a trial challenge inspection we bore in mind that under the future convention such an inspection may be conducted at any site or facility in a State party, without the right of refusal on its part. It is felt that the most typical grounds for challenge may be doubt based on the suspected covert storage or production of chemical weapons. Against this background the facility selected for the trial inspection was an arms depot at which chemical weapons are not and have never been stored. The area of the facility is about 3 square kilometres, and the perimeter about 7 kilometres. Located in the area are approximately 100 buildings and structure with a storage capacity equivalent to more than 1,000 railway wagons.

The trial inspection was conducted over a period of five days. The size of the inspection team, including observers, was 20 persons. They included armaments experts, specialists in CW detection and experts from the Soviet delegation to the Conference on Disarmament, who are very familiar with the background of the negotiations on this issue. The team owed its relatively large size to the fact that besides conducting the inspection it had to deal with all the organizational problems connected with the preparations for and the conduct of the inspection. While preparing for the inspection we tried to establish conditions as close as possible to actual ones. However, as this was a national exercise and the first one of its kind, some exceptions had to

(Mr. Batsanov, USSR)

the objectives of the inspection team and the timing of its visit, which of course would not be the case for actual inspections. However, no actions were accomplished in direct reaction to the team's visit to the facility. The inspection proper began with a meeting in which the team members and the facility management participated. Instruction was provided in accident protection. Then the inspection team was divided into four subgroups: a subgroup to study documentation, a subgroup to inspect buildings and structures, a subgroup to monitor means of transport and the facility perimeter, and a subgroup to work with the facility staff.

The principal focus of attention during the inspection was proper balance between the task of ensuring effective verification and that of safeguarding confidential information. The inspection team endeavoured to refrain from gathering information unrelated to chemical weapons. Nevertheless, a large amount of such information concerning the depot came to the notice of the inspectors. The inspection team visited 10 per cent of the installations located within the depot. However, that did not adversely affect the effectiveness of the inspection. In the first place all the types of buildings and structures were visited on a selective basis at the discretion of the members of the team. Secondly, although the facility management had designated the most sensitive areas which, it felt, had no connection with chemical weapons, the inspection team did not find the alternative measures proposed by the management sufficiently persuasive and visited those areas.

In selecting specific areas to be visited, the inspectors took into account such factors as the presence of air purification systems in storage areas, the presence of protective gear and decontamination equipment in and immediately next to storage areas, the presence of specially protected sectors, the absence of data on individual storage areas or other subdivisions of the facility within the overall system of documentation, separate record-keeping for individual subdivisions, or cases where items had been removed from storage areas immediately prior to the arrival of the inspection team, which came to light as a result of examination of the documentation and interviews with the facility staff. In this exercise the inspection team began its work with the least intrusive verification methods. The principle of "managed access" also governed the interviews with the facility staff. In the course of the interviews the representatives of the management who were present were able to reject those questions which, in their opinion, went beyond the purposes of the inspection, but if the members of the inspection team considered that a question was important, the situation was resolved between the leader of the inspection team and the facility director.

As a result of the trial inspection, the inspection team confirmed that there were no chemical weapons at the facility. It should be pointed out, however, that the steps and measures taken during the inspection proved to be sufficient to a large extent because the members of the inspection team were familiar with the designations of types of Soviet chemical weapons, and were thus able to dispense with the need to open the munitions in order to determine the types of charge used.

(Mr. Batsanov, USSR)

Verification of the presence or absence of undeclared or unknown forms or types of chemical weapons is indeed a complicated task. To perform this task it may be necessary to open specimens of munitions, devices and containers. It would therefore seem advisable to consider the possibility of developing verification methods and equipment by means of which it can be determined without opening it that a given specimen is not a chemical weapon.

As a result of the inspection, the team drew up a number of conclusions and suggestions, which are also set out in the report presented today. In particular, the team came to the conclusion that in order to reduce the level of disclosure of sensitive information which is not CW-related, the management of a facility being inspected must be able during the inspection to propose alternative measures as a substitute for access by the inspectors to particularly confidential information. However, the test of acceptability of such alternative measures must in every case be that they are satisfactory to the inspection team. The results of the inspection also demonstrate that the international inspectorate must undertake to safeguard confidential information which may become known to the inspectors in the course of the inspection. Hence, for example, where no breaches are identified, the inspection report should contain a minimum of factual information and should not reveal the nature of the activities conducted at the inspected facility.

In presenting document CD/966, the Soviet delegation hopes that it will contribute to the constructive consideration of the challenge inspection problem and facilitate deeper investigation of issues related to such inspections.

In conclusion, I would like to say a few words in connection with the fact that in a few moments we will be adopting the report of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ambassador Pierre Morel of France for the successful completion of his work as Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee. I believe the progress reflected in the report is due to a large extent to the tireless efforts of Ambassador Morel and his thorough approach to the complicated issues which are on the negotiating table, his energy and his flexibility. I should also like to congratulate Ambassador Carl-Magnus Hyltenius of Sweden on his election to the post of Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons for this year, and to express the conviction that under his leadership we will be able to achieve a decisive breakthrough on the convention.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for his statement. That concludes my list of speakers today. Does any other member wish to take the floor? It seems not.

We shall now proceed to adopt the report of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, as contained in document CD/961. If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Conference adopts the report of the Ad hoc Committee.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I should like now to report to you briefly on a number of organizational questions. I wish to announce that the first meeting of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons during the present annual session will be held tomorrow, Wednesday, 21 February, at 3 p.m. in Conference room V. I am informed that the Chairmen of the Ad hoc Committees on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-nuclear-weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons and on Radiological Weapons are consulting at present before these subsidiary bodies formally start their work. The opening meetings of the Ad hoc Committees will be announced as soon as these consultations are concluded. In connection with the re-establishment of the Ad hoc Committee under agenda item 5, entitled "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", I am continuing my consultations with a view to reaching early agreement on this question. Once work in the subsidiary bodies starts, we shall then proceed as usual to circulate a timetable of meetings of the Conference and its subsidiary bodies, for the information of delegations.

I have no other business for today, and I shall therefore now adjourn this plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 22 February, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.